

INK

ATLANTA

**Tattoo Lifestyle &
Culture Magazine**

Vol.1 Issue 6
Dec/Jan 2011/12

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Inkaholiks
A Krampus
Christmas
Brett Pundt
and more

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PUBLISHER'S RAMBLINGS

Happy Ho-Ho Holidays, Atlanta! I can't believe another year has come and gone. I would like to extend the warmest possible wishes for this end of the year and holiday season to all our advertisers and readers. Thank you for making this magazine possible. This issue is packed full of goodness and is my gift

to you. Sorry I can't give you all gift cards to Best Buy or something. This simple gift of coffee table/toilet-time literature is all I can afford. I do have a bit of bumner news for our readers though. You are going to have to wait until February for the next issue of INK Atlanta. The holidays are great but can be a buzz kill for business. Everyone is either broke or out of town during this time of year (recession or not) and I am no different. Kid's out of school half the month and I have a couple of conventions to attend in January and that equals a massive lack of time. Therefore we have decided to be on an 11 issue per year print cycle. Have no fear though the February issues of both PRICK Mag and INK Atlanta will be super banging. 2012 is lining up to be pretty awesome as far as growing the products and bringing even more toilet-time literature your way.

Enjoy this Holiday Issue. See you next year! – Chuck B.

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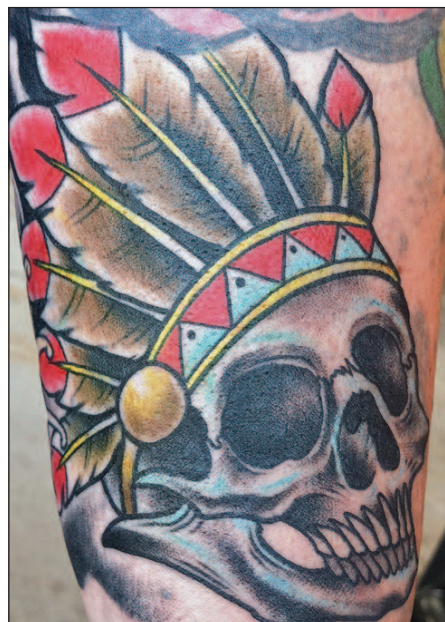
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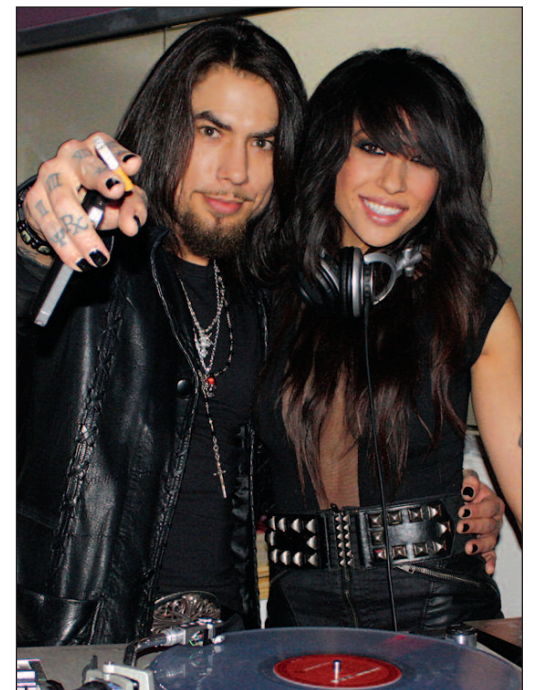
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Above: A Krampus Christmas
Below: Brett Pundt



On the cover: Cherry Ciroc
Photo by: Greg Truelove



Above: Dave Navarro at Inkaholiks
Below: Calu of Smith's Olde Bar



LISTEN UP

A KRAMPUS CHRISTMAS

BY CORY HAMILTON

Imagine a world where Christmas has more to it than the two viewpoints popularized by modern American culture; you know the shallow commercial view and the religious birth-of-our-savior view. If you agree in more than a two-party Christmas system, then The Little 5 Points Rock Star Orchestra's *A Krampus Christmas* show is for you. Yes, there's snow. There are brightly wrapped presents. There are pretty girls smiling and having a good time. However, the snow is frequently a disturbing reddish color, the presents are more likely to be kicked around than opened and the smiles, while friendly, have too much teeth altogether. They have a tendency to make you feel attracted, afraid and entertained all at once.

By now, if you have never been to a L5PRSO event before you're beginning to wonder who these people are and what the hell is wrong with them. If you have seen their shows you're probably thinking 'What are they up to now?' and 'How sick do I have to fake being to get out of that brain numbing company Christmas party and get to this one instead?' I sat down with Rob Thompson (The Devil & Music Master), Heidi Howard (Director), Trevor Jones (Holy Ghost), Naomi Lavender (Mary), Deedee Chmielewski (Little Girl), and Chris Love (Jesus) to get the answers to these, and other important questions ... except the one about faking sick - you're on your own there.

Q: WHAT IS THE L5PRSO AND HOW DID ALL THIS COME TOGETHER?

Rob: It was born out of Holy Mother Tattoo, when Jett (Bryant) and I were both working there. A lot of the local tattoo artists aren't just tattooing. They draw, sculpt, paint, often play music and other creative endeavors as well. We weren't just locked into one thing. We both played music, and were talking about how we'd love to do Jesus Christ Superstar but I only wanted to play Jesus or Judas, and didn't know who would do the other roll. We just kinda ... glanced at each other. Then we pulled in Frank Anzalone, who worked in that shop at the same time, as a musician and a lot of other friends and musicians, and actually pulled it off ... Once we had the space (at 7 Stages) open up to us, we did the *666* show, *2112*, *Christmas with the Devil*, and *A Krampus Christmas*, which is the most integrated thing we've done. The RSO wouldn't exist without the tattoo shops, and 7 Stages and all those artistic people.

Q: WHAT ARTISTS AND SHOPS ARE INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT?

Rob: I'm an artist at Sacred Heart Tattoo. Frank (guitar) is working at Holy Mother. Jim Stacy, who is playing Krampus, tattoos as well. Shane Morton, who does all of our make-up and a lot of artistic stuff too, has been involved from the beginning. He's an appointment only artist. Also, just about the entire cast are heavily tattooed. The tattoo community really supports us, and has from the get go.

Q: WHAT IS THIS "KRAMPUS" YOU SPEAK OF?

Trevor: Krampus is really interesting. He's this old idea of what Christmas used to be. Krampus emerged from Germanic culture as an accompaniment to St. Nicholas. The idea is there's not only the pious element of Christmas but there's also retribution for the ...

Heidi: Baddies!

Trevor: The evil children of the world get a harsh treatment from this monster who beats them, ties them in a bag, and throws them in the river.





Heidi: He's Santa's sidekick, who whips the bad children.

Rob: One of the most interesting parts, historically, is that he actually predates Santa Clause, so Christmas really just had the bad part to start off with. It's held over from old Pagan Germania. Sort of like the Christmas tree, which predates Christianity in Germany too. Lots of things just got kind of co-opted.

Trevor: They still have today these parades where people dress up in Krampus costumes. Most European countries still have this element of Christmas that involves negative reinforcement in which you're judged. It hasn't really associated itself with American Christmas tradition. Krampus represents this idea that bad kids get some judgment, and we want to celebrate that! There's a bad kid in everybody, and we want to incorporate that with the metal, and bring Krampus into the Christmas story . . . We do a Christmas story for all the bad kids.

Naomi: This is our second year introducing this folklore character. I think it's really interesting to look at other cultures and think about what their children are thinking about, and what's scary to them. What's the good stuff and what's the bad stuff, and if you're very bad, what will happen?

Trevor: We're trying to create this new fusion folklore for Christmas because our community doesn't necessarily adapt to the old one. We're sick of it.

Q: LAST YEAR'S SHOW SOLD OUT COMPLETELY AND GOT GREAT REVIEWS. WHAT'S THE SAME, AND WHAT'S NEW THIS YEAR?

Rob: There's not that many rock and roll Christmas songs around, so we're keeping the same lineup of songs, but we changed the way we use them this year. Also, James and Andrew wrote a whole new script.

Heidi: Last year, the way we developed the script was a process, over six months with a small group, developing ideas about what's fucked up about Christmas and our society, and what other societies practice. It was a collaborative effort all the way through. This year we wanted to do this again, but take the story in a whole new direction. It's still a rock show. We love the success and the collaborative effort, and the international appeal.

Trevor: The more (fake) bodily fluids we can include the better, I think. Blood, urine, feces . . . the more we can include the audience . . . that gets on the audience, the better. Also, we have three



times the amount of PBR we had last year. Pabst Blue Ribbon beer is sponsoring this show!

Q: PBR IS A FANTASTIC AND INCREDIBLY APROPRIATE SPONSOR. ANYBODY ELSE YOU SHOULD MENTION OR THANK?

Trevor: The Goethe Institute has supported our endeavors, especially incorporating the German folklore in our festivities.

Heidi: The German Consulate has supported our work for many years. We've done many German collaborations and shows, brought German artists here, and we have a long history of support. We went and started talking to them about this, and they were very excited about the folklore idea. We were really biting our nails when they came to the show. They came though, and loved it. They're supporting us again this year.

That's the low-down on what will clearly be THE Christmas show to see this year. A *Krampus Christmas* will be running Dec. 8th thru the 10th at 7 Stages Theater in Little 5 Points. For tickets and more information, contact the 7 Stages box office at 404-523-7647 or on the web at 7Stages.org. ★

INKAHOLIKS

NFL's Uche Nwaneri opens luxury tattoo lounge in Atlanta

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY CHUCK B.

Atlanta needed another tattoo shop like it needed a hole in the head but what Uche Nwaneri, number 77 of the Jacksonville Jaguars, has done is something completely different. It is nothing Atlanta has had before and it is a whole new concept that has been completely misunderstood by locals since its inception. Inkaholiks is fundamentally three businesses in one with the Ink Lounge being the centerpiece. Go see it for yourself before passing judgement. What has been created is a new, clean and stylish multi-purpose venue designed and intended to cater to the tattoo community as a whole.

The bar/lounge was and is intended as a place where the tattoo community can come and hang out together much like at a tattoo convention. The state of the art tattoo studio section of the establishment is clean and sterile, completely walled off with an aquarium style glass window that is smoke proof and drunk proof. It would take an NFL offensive lineman size guy like Uche to be able to crash through the partition. Don't test the theory though because if you did break the glass you would have to deal with an actual NFL offensive lineman. You don't want to go there. The third part of the equation is a hair salon for all your skin care, hair coloring and styling needs. You can get a modern day make-over then have a drink and chill afterward. We spoke with Uche on his new endeavor, his tattoo history and his thoughts on entering the industry.

Q: When did you start getting tattoos?

I first started getting tattoos as a freshman in college. I had always been so mystified by tattoos. When I was in elementary school my big brother's best friend was a tattoo artist and also a comic book artist. I was always with my brother, and we were always around art. I was just drawn



Uche Nwaneri
#77 Jacksonville
Jaguars,
Inkaholiks
Atlanta owner.



Above: Inkaholiks crew hanging with Playboy's Alie Layus and Dave Navarro of Jane's Addiction.



Above: The Ink Lounge, separated from the tattoo studio by wall of 2-way glass. No partiers in the studio!



Above: Inkaholiks Tattoo studio behind glass.
Below: Atlanta Falcon's Dominique Franks and Darrin Walls.





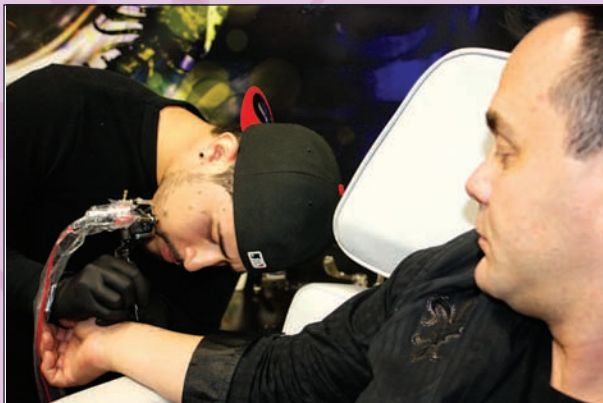
Above: Host, Dave Navarro, and DJ Alie Layus.



Above: Uche and his girlfriend Michelle.



Above: Operations manager Shane Perry and Bar manager/local sweetie Kasey Swinford.



Above: Chris Cooper tattoos the Inkaholiks' "I" on Uche to mark the opening of the studio and lounge; Brian Munoz tattoos the same "I" on Shane Perry, forever marking the occasion. **Below:** Tattoos done by Chris Cooper.

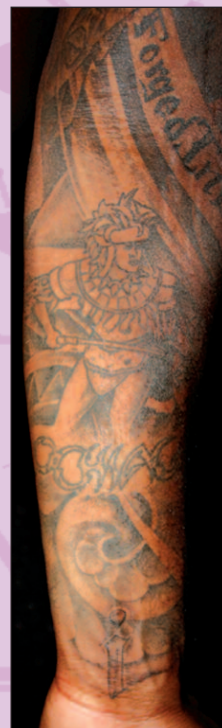


Below Right: Dave Navarro of Jane's Addiction (with Chris Cooper's guidance) tattoos a "J.A." logo on Chuck B.



Below: Chuck B's Dave Navarro tattoo





Uche Nwaneri and his growing collection of tattoos.

INKAHOLIKS CONTINUED

into everything they were doing. He would draw with my brother and I would sneak a notepad and start copying what they were doing. My father was an art design major in college as well. So I guess you can say the love for art has run in my family.

My first tattoo was done at a local spot in Indiana near my college (Purdue University). It was your typical tattoo experience (laughs) and I guess it was one of those situations: you're a college student, you're broke and you get the cheapest one you can find! But before the NFL combine I wanted to get a good piece done, so while training in Houston I went to Texas Body Art Tattoo Studio. They are a big spot out there and the guys treated me great. That was where I got a really good professional piece! Since then I have been worked on by Randy Muai in Jacksonville as well as Chris Cooper and Alex Guma in Atlanta.

Q: What prompted you to open a tattoo lounge? Tell us about the concept and what you have done to bring it all together?

Right around a year ago was the first time I got an opportunity to brainstorm the idea that would eventually become Inkaholiks. Me and a former acquaintance started getting artists to come to Jacksonville and do work on teammates of mine. That was actually the beginning of Inkaholiks at its infant stage. We really didn't know what it was going to be. It wasn't until about January that I began to understand what I wanted to do with it. My inspiration for the concept strangely enough, came from The Social Network movie. It was a simple premise to me.

You take a simple concept, and you make it something that people can relate to. You evolve it into something that appeals to everyone because it's so simple yet so intuitive. As someone who loves tattoos, I knew that in order to give it the appeal it would need I had to do something that has never been done. I didn't want to just start another tattoo shop. I wanted to start a movement. Something that would make people look at things in a different way. That is Inkaholiks.

Inkaholiks is a luxury tattoo parlor, a lounge and a hair salon. It's a hybrid blend of culture, fashion and lifestyle. Its roots are in the love for art and ink. Its appeal is in its edginess and chic style. One misconception that I think most of the neighboring parlors in Atlanta have is that they think we are some type of club with tattoo artists sitting in a corner tattooing people. That's the furthest from the truth.

Inkaholiks is split into three different sections. When you walk into the building you will be in the reception area. To the left is the tattoo parlor; to the right is The Ink Blot Salon, and in the middle is The Ink Lounge. Each area is separated by walls and glass windows that allow clients and their friends to look into each side through the glass windows. So if you come with your friends to get a tattoo, while your being tattooed, your friends are in the lounge having a drink (21 and older) and watching you get worked on from the lounge itself. It creates a new aspect in which the client and their company can enjoy the experience. It gives our clients a place they can come and sit down and relax after a hard day at work. A place they can come and have a good time without the overbearing crowd of a nightclub. The salon plays into the culture of



the tattoo community. It's geared towards the bold fashion that a lot of people in the culture enjoy. Wild hair, crazy colors, and trendy looks. Not only that but the Ink Blot doubles as a full Med Spa: laser hair removal, tattoo removal, permanent makeup, all these things are progressive. Fusing these things into the concept of Inkaholiks isn't shitting on the tattoo industry, it's evolving it. It's progressive thinking. We have all the respect in the world for all our neighbors, and the traditions they covet. We are just bringing a new concept we feel works for us. Love it or hate it, Inkaholiks is here and we aren't going anywhere.

Q: Some frown upon non-tattooers opening a shop. What are your thoughts and how do you want to contribute to the industry?

I would just like to tell them to embrace us. Sure, I'm not a tattoo artist, but I'm just as much a lover of art as [artists] are. I have a non-profit organization specifically geared to raising money for scholarships to students involved in the Arts. From art design to graphic design, I give back to the community. It's just who I am. Inkaholiks will be no different. We run a clean and legit business. We take very seriously our work at Inkaholiks as a tattoo parlor. We have a great group of artists, and we consult with all of them weekly about ways that we can improve our shop as a vendor of the arts. And we also work with them on the traditions that the old guard have had in place for decades. With that said, we also encourage them to think of ideas that are fresh and new. I realize that some may never accept us and that's okay. You can't win everybody over, fine. But like I said before we respect everyone, but we aren't going to back down from what we believe in. And we will always stand up for what we believe in as a company. Our team of artists are who we believe in and they will do our talking for us. I invite everyone who doubts us or doesn't see us as legit to come to 1878 Piedmont Avenue and check our spot out. Just come in and have a look around and I guarantee 99% of guys new and old will respect what we are doing. Even if they don't like us, they will respect the concept and the new idea we are bringing to the industry.

Q: As a sports fan, I have to ask, how are tattoos received within the NFL? Any restrictions or team owners that frown on them?

The NFL is rampant with ink. Tattoos are a very big part of the culture of athletes. Not only in the NFL but in ALL team sports. I can't tell you how many guys have already told me they are coming for some new ink as soon as the season is over. It's just a part of what athletes love.

Teams don't have any rules in regards to tattoos. I mean I doubt you could just walk around the facility with a naked lady tattooed on your arm but other than that I doubt there is any team that has restrictions on ink. I have seen guys who have almost no skin showing at all because they have so much ink.

I would say 95% of the guys on my team have ink somewhere. Even a lot of coaches have ink they got back in their playing days. It's really awesome to see that they were just like us when they were playing. But it's pretty rare on our team to see someone who has no ink at all.

Q: Other than being able to smash on people and get paid a lot for doing it, what is the best part of being a professional football player?

I think being able to work in the community is a very important part of being an athlete, and it's a really rewarding experience to be able to sign autographs after a game. To be able to visit and speak with kids at their schools, it gives you a real connection with the people who watch you play on Sunday. At the end of the day they make it all possible for us, they support the team and the teams supports them. That is one of the best feelings in the world, to hear the chants and the screams. Makes it all worth it.

Q: And what's the worst part?

The worst is waking up the day after a game and your whole body is sore and achy. That really sucks.

Q: Shout outs or final thoughts?

Just wanna give a shout out to Shane Perry and Casey Holy. Those are my business partners and they help with the day-to-day at Inkaholiks. Inkaholiks wouldn't have been possible without their hard work. Also Dondrell Lee, our video director. Also a shout out to the Inkaholiks artists: Chris Cooper, Brian Munoz, Cody Fortson, Michael "Genghis" Ray and our very talented apprentice Clint Crider. And can't forget our awesome receptionists Simerly Cook and Leundra Bell. Inkaholiks: Addicted to Ink!

For more info check out the Inkaholiks website: www.inkaholiks.com ★



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FEATURED ARTIST

BRETT PUNDT

of Olde School Tattoo - Marietta

BY J.J. DIABLO

Tucked away in a shopping plaza off Canton Hwy. in good old Marietta, Olde School Tattoo is making waves with solid artwork and a warm, cozy environment. But don't let the lobby drum set, comfy couches and fresh new wood floors fool you. This is no living room. It is home to some truly exceptional artwork. Artist, Brett Pundt, can usually be found in the first studio on the right either tattooing or painting away, doing what he loves, in true humility. However, one step to the other side of the canvas reveals an artist with a bold statement that speaks volumes.

Pundt started his tattooing apprenticeship in February 2003 in a small town in Alabama. He credits the rural setting and not "super high standards" of the area as a "great place to learn" due to such a blank artistic slate to start from. After a couple of years he moved downtown to a street shop to better his craft for a year before joining up with Jason Blanton of Dirty South Tattoos. After a year with Blanton, Pundt returned to Georgia and started with Olde School Tattoo where he has now been for over four years.

Pundt's style covers many genres of tattooing from more traditional work to portraiture. He says his influences

are so vast, it's almost impossible to name them all, not to mention his intentional avoidance to risk leaving anyone out. He says that "as far as influences, there are A LOT of guys, and girls, doing amazing tattoos and paintings. Not even just tattoo artists, but just art in general. You can get inspiration from a lot of different things. The way life is you get inspired off of life with some of the people you meet, the conversations you have and different relationships with different people." He goes on to say that "whether it's a feeling, or an idea, an image of something I see, some of that will end up turning into some sort of tattoo or artwork in one way or another."

Pundt's artistry really took shape around his fourth or fifth year





of tattooing as he “started really, really getting into drawing everything [he] tattooed. When I started out I was doing a lot of flash and people would bring me pictures I’d pretty much trace. Then I started drawing stuff more and more. As it’s been going along I don’t think I’ve hit my peak, I feel like everything has been kind of a start, more or less. Where it ends up 10 or 15 years from now, I’m interested to see what kind of stuff I’ll be into and what I’ll be drawing and tattooing because I have progressively gotten better over the years at both tattooing and art-work so . . . It’s something I plan to do forever. It’s been a long pregression. I don’t feel like I’ve had a peak yet.” Pundt is “always excited to do new stuff” and enjoys the challenge of “visualizing the finished product then seeing it become a reality.”

Currently, Pundt really enjoys doing “a lot of different things” from “black and grey to photo-realism to traditional stuff to even just doing something really wacky . . . I enjoy everything about tattooing.”

As far as what the future holds Pundt’s focus is on “painting more; I’d like to start making prints. I’d also like to see some of my bigger projects start getting finished,” explaining that “some of [his] bigger pieces will go long periods” before coming back in, or “come in sporadically to get other things started” wanting “to see 1-3 sessions go down and get larger scale projects” complete to add to his portfolio. “Having a sleeve and visualizing it being done then finishing it is a different reality, having somebody commit to going through all the suffering of getting tattooed and getting an entire sleeve done which is a large undertaking.”

Brett Pundt himself has a large stomach and chest torso piece from Jason Kelly of Memorial Tattoo, ATL that they’ve been working on over the past year. “I’ve got my whole torso done by him. That was an undertaking. I was getting something done every three weeks. Some days



you don’t mind coming in, but some days, depending on what we were doing I’d somewhat dread it. Getting your stomach tattooed sucks!” Pundt tries to discourage his clients from overdoing themselves valuing benefits of doing smaller 3-4 hours sessions, finding stopping points for each progressive session.



As far as parting words, Pundt encourages potential clients to “not go looking for deals, like \$35 names. It’s okay if you’re looking for a pair of shoes or a cell phone . . . A tattoo is with you forever.”

For more of Brett’s work and to book an appointment visit: <http://oldeschooltattoo.com/> or call Olde School Tattoo at 770.427.5003 ★

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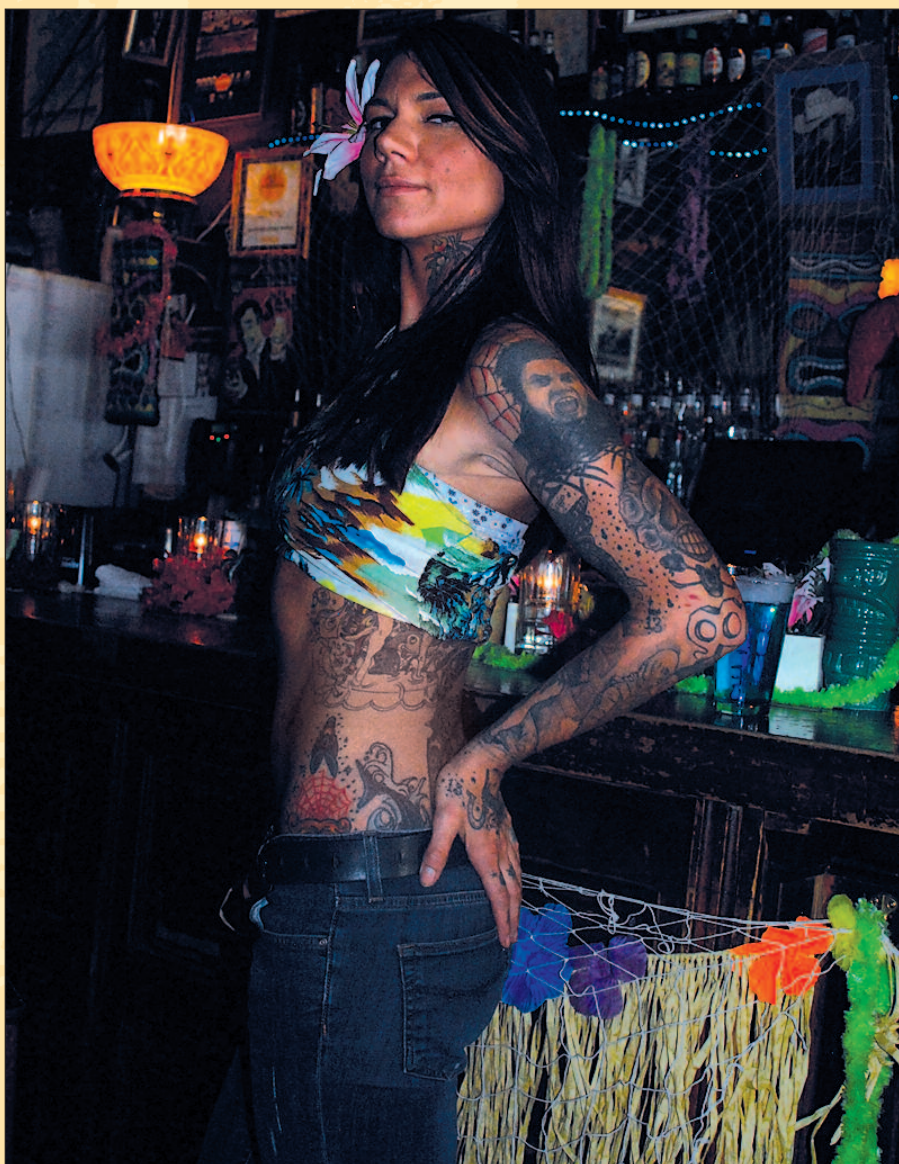
Smith's Olde Bar

Mai-Tai Mondays:
A Taste of the Beach Year Round

BY HARRISON KNOLLE PHOTOS BY CASSANDRA DECORTE

Chances are that if you've been in Atlanta for any amount of time you've frequented or at least been to Smith's Olde Bar off of Piedmont Avenue. Whether it's to catch some music in one of their two great music rooms or just to enjoy a drink in a relaxed environment with some cool people, most of us have made the pilgrimage to this ATL watering hole. What many of us may not have realized is that Mondays at Smith's have a special significance, Mother F'n Mai Tais!

Since 2002 Smith's has been running their distinctive Mai Tai Mondays giving the folks of the city a little taste of the ocean breeze throughout the entire year. We caught up with Smith's very own Calu Preciosa to talk about



the tropical glee that invades on Mondays. "I have always been obsessed with Tiki culture, so it just seemed like the next natural progression to bring a little piece of the beach into Smith's throughout the summer and winter."

And honestly, what better day out of the week to try and give people a little something different? Everyone has that slight dip into depression on a Monday staring down at that long workweek ahead, why not unwind with a cold mai tai? Smith's is also serving up a great island dish as a special like,

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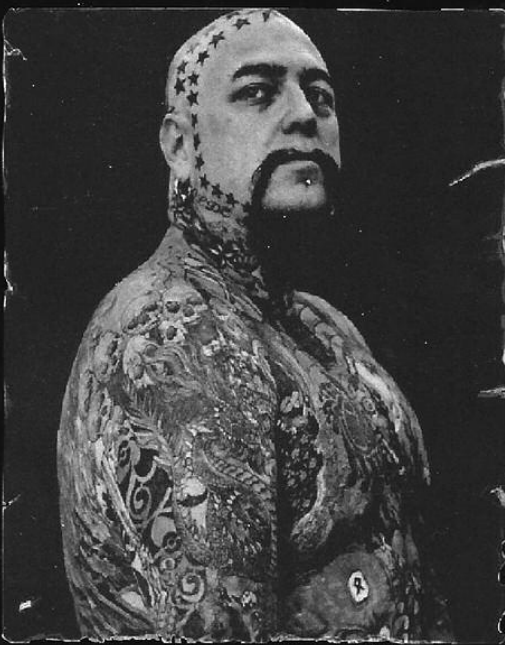
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Smith's Olde Bar continued ...

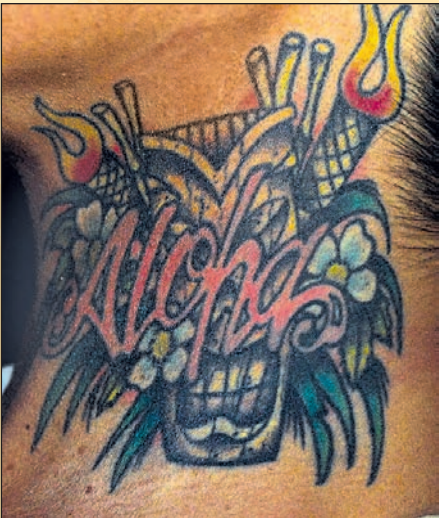
“Polynesian pork chops paired with crunchy coleslaw with egg, fried and topped with a pineapple slice and a cherry.” But Calu and the other bartenders certainly don’t count out all the other folks who come in on a Monday night and just need their usual, saying “you can always come in on a Monday and suck down a Mai Tai or you can just have a PBR and a shot of Jameson, whatever you want! I think Smith’s is a place you can go and feel comfortable. Whether you’re old, young, tattooed or a suit, we don’t judge.”

Aside from Mai Tai Mondays, Smith’s has brought herds of people through its doors for food, drinks and concerts. Smith’s Olde Bar’s crown jewel is their upstairs music room. Hosting every type of musician from Frank Black and The Catholics to Train. In addition to the amazing upstairs, Smith’s also has another music room which they call the Atlanta Room. “It’s a super cozy intimate room, so on any given night we can have up to eight different bands playing in one night.” True to its name the Atlanta room often hosts loads of local musicians.

Smith’s Olde Bar has worked to become one of the inebriating institutions in Atlanta with delicious eats and great people at all times. That’s why Mai Tai Monday and Smith’s Olde Bar was chosen as this month’s Tattooed Bistro. Go and see the beautiful Calu and her Mai Tai madness. Why? ‘Cause INK Atlanta said so!

Smith’s Olde Bar is located at 1578 Piedmont Ave. Atlanta, GA. 30307.

You can also visit their website at:
www.smithsoldebar.com ★



MISS INK ATLANTA DEC-JAN

CHERRY CIROC

BY HARRISON KNOLLE PHOTOS BY GREG TRUELOVE

For this month's Miss Ink Atlanta we bring you the lovely Taylor aka Cherry Ciroc. A 21-year-old pharmacy student from the A with a passion for life and a love of tattoo artwork, Cherry received her first piece when she was just sixteen but has grown her collection beautifully over the years. Cherry doesn't think that her aspiration to become a pharmacist will in any way be hindered by her tattoos saying, "Yes, I will be tatted up in my lab coat."

Q: When and what was your first tattoo?

My first tattoo was a cherry on my hip because of my nickname and over the years my artwork has greatly expanded. Of course being sixteen without a parent's consent I couldn't go to the tattoo shop, so being immature, I went to a local person's house and got it done. It actually didn't turn out bad. I haven't gotten it covered! I had to get it somewhere where my mom couldn't find it . . . which she eventually did.

Q: Do you think that people judge you based on your amount of artwork?

I hate being underestimated because I am very smart. Just because I have a lot of artwork doesn't mean that I'm a slacker. I don't like seeing people with bad ink either. Remember guys, you get what you pay for. Personally, I love getting tatted! I don't know if you can call that a hobby but I enjoy the feeling and seeing my thoughts come to life on






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CHERRY CIROC CONTINUED



my skin.

I sometimes get looked at differently because of my artwork. Occasionally I have people interested and others who look down and try to preach to me about how I'm harming my body and other nonsense. But I live life on the edge and to the fullest; I'm not too concerned with what others think.

Q: How do your parents feel about your ink?

My mom wasn't too happy. I had to hide my sleeve for months because she was so anti-tattoos but she eventually got over it . . . I think. I don't mind showing my artwork but I personally do not like when people ask how many. Only because I don't know!

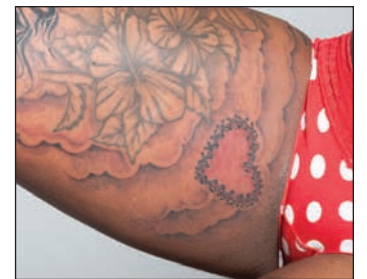
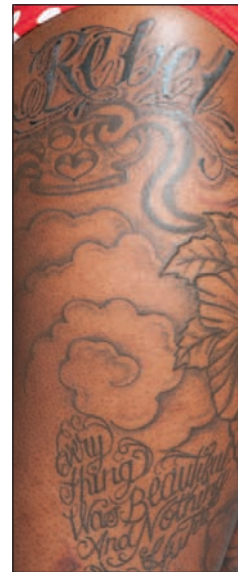
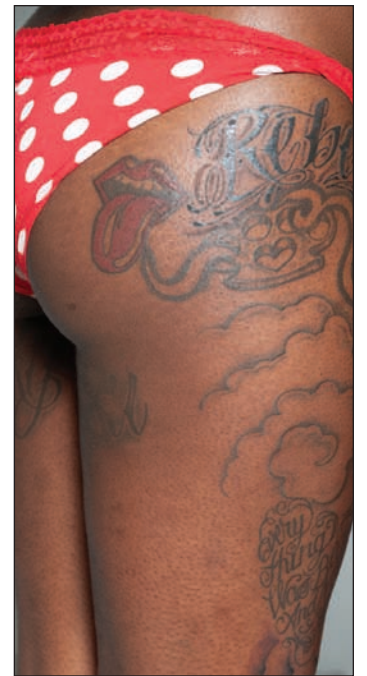
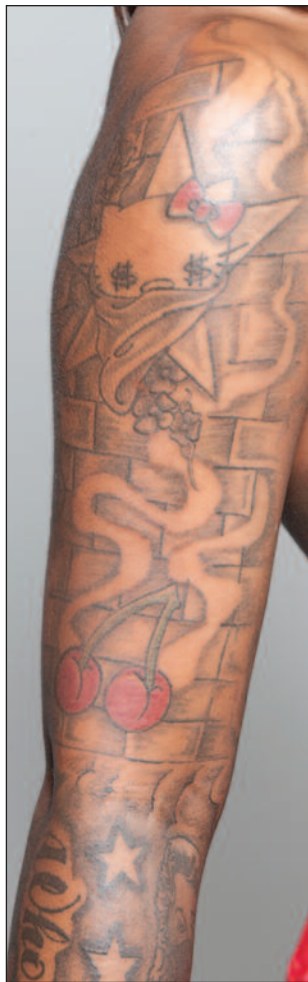
Q: Talk to me about some of your artwork and where you go.

My tattoos started off as small pieces then

gradually got larger. I started off with the Hello Kitty on my arm and it eventually turned into a sleeve. I believe that yes, your tattoos should have meaning but it can also be about anything you like and want to look at for the rest of your life. I have a tattoo inside of my lip of a copyrighted symbol saying that all my tattoos are copyrighted by me. My tattoo artist was my very close friend name Andrew Fortune. He passed away this year but his artwork lives on me forever. Recently I have been going to a shop named Ink Wizard located in Conyers, Ga and Official Ink to an artist named "Quick", located in Decatur, Ga.

Any final comments?

I would like to personally shout out Greg Truelove for the awesome shoot, Chuck B. for giving me this opportunity and also the people who dislike tattoos and all the tatted females out there! :) ★



Chris Huff

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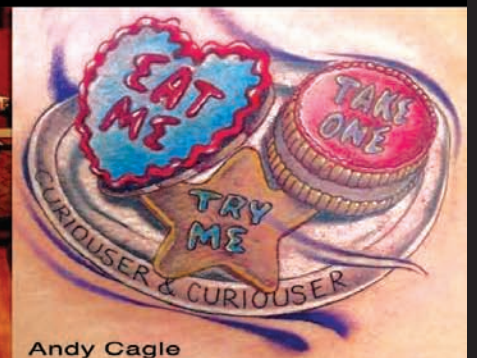
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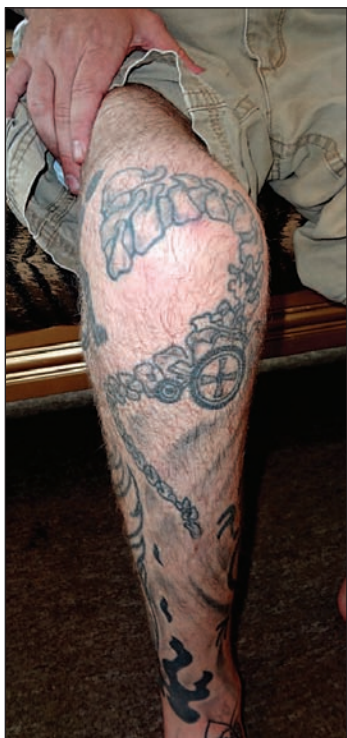
COVERED

MICHAEL MILLS

Tattooed Inspiration

BY HARRISON KNOLLE

Ink Atlanta is proud to bring you the story of a man who has overcome adversity and true hardship to become a world-class athlete. The thirty-five year old, Michael Mills, is originally from just outside of Tupelo, Mississippi but now is pleased to call Covington, Ga. his home. The heavily tattooed Mills is a husband and father of two children, Brandon and Katriana. Mills is also a world-class athlete competing in different wheelchair racing events in the U.S. and around the globe.



On May 2nd of 1993, Michael was hit head-on by a drunk driver after skateboarding one day with some of his friends. Mills was sixteen years old and spent his seventeenth birthday in the hospital. "Actually I was dead for 26 minutes until they found me. So I was blessed to be around after it was over with and done; went through a whole bunch of surgeries, open-heart surgery. The cool thing I got from it is the outcome of what my life is now." Even after everything that he's been through Mills still keeps a giant smile across his face. At just seventeen Mills was the only person in a wheelchair in a seventy-mile radius of his small hometown in Mississippi. At such a young age Mills was astonishingly resilient, "What I can handle and what may not be what someone else can handle and this has never been a big deal for me. I was growing up and I always told my dad I wanted to be different. You know he was ex-military so he always had this mentality that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. So when I woke up from my coma, he told me you got your wish."

Mills first found out about racing after seeing an event in the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta at one in the morning. The very next day he went to his Dad and said, "I want to do this." Determined to break into the sport he called up a company based out of Atlanta that built racing chairs, "I told them this is all the money I have and a little while after they sent me a used chair." At first his father was somewhat doubtful about his racing, "My Dad told me I'd never make anything out of it. He was being realistic so to speak. Well now you know I've traveled all





over the world, I've made two U.S. teams, I've done very well with my racing career."

Mills competes in what is called the Open Division, that is host to athletes from around the world, both full time racers and part timers like Michael who have other jobs and families. This division also has both amputees and paraplegics like Mills who suffered a T12-L1 spinal chord injury that left him paralyzed from the hips down. Mills has had a stellar racing career, qualifying for two world championships in Brazil, being ranked in the 1500 meter in 2005, and representing the U.S. in Japan last year in a half marathon where he finished 63 out of over 220 people.

Michael got his first tattoo when he was nineteen just as he was getting into racing. "Growing up in a small town in Mississippi it was very taboo to get tattooed back home. It was one of those things where people didn't have tattoos." For Mills, like the rest of us, choosing an artist is one of the most important aspects of getting tattooed. "There's tattoo shops all over Atlanta and this area but it's the fact that you find someone and you have a relationship with them and they become family members to you." This ties into a lot of the artwork that Mills keeps on his skin with many of his tattoos being family related. Also every five years Michael gets a handicap tattoo on the anniversary of his accident. "Tattoos have just been one of those things that kind of helped me through my life of being injured; kind of helped me past those little levels of going through the negative parts of my life and helped me along with that. And I think the people I met while getting tattooed have made a big difference in my life too." ★

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